

# Lay Summaries

## A PCR guide to writing lay summaries

A lay summary is a brief summary of a research project that is used to explain complex ideas and technical and scientific terms to people who do not have prior knowledge about the subject area. It is clear and accessible to people who do not have a scientific background, and explains the relevance and impact on people affected by prostate cancer. Remember that people who read your lay summary will be an interested audience, but are not specialists.

Your lay summary is important because it will be reviewed by a number of our Patient Panel members, who will comment and score your project based on:

- How well the idea is explained.
- How relevant is it to people with prostate cancer.
- How interesting the idea is.
- Whether or not there is anything in the proposal that makes them feel uncomfortable.
- The clarity and quality of the writing.

Lay reviewers will only read the lay description of project (section 1.1). Therefore, this needs to include enough information for them to understand the purpose and methods of your project.

### TIPS ON LANGUAGE AND LAYOUT

DO:	DON'T:
Use succinct, short sentences – and write in plain English.	Use overly complicated or uncommon Words.
Use bullet points and headings to break up long blocks of text.	Use overly long sentences (25 words or less is a good guide).
Give the reader a reason to care about what you do – address the “so what?” Focus on the relevance of your research for people affected by prostate cancer; why is the work important to them?	Use jargon, abbreviations, acronyms or technical terms, unless absolutely necessary and explain it if you do have to keep them in.
Imagine you’re speaking directly to your reader. Write in an active voice.	Forget to check spelling, grammar and punctuation.
Ask a non-scientist to review your summary before you submit.	Copy your scientific abstract and use as your lay summary

Language should be person-centred rather than focusing on the circumstance, symptoms or disease. For example:

- ‘People with prostate cancer’ is preferable to ‘prostate cancer subjects’
- Say ‘a person with prostate cancer’ rather than ‘a sufferer of prostate cancer’.

### Other Helpful Resources:

1. Duke, M. (2012). ‘How to Write a Lay Summary’. DCC How-to Guides. Edinburgh: Digital Curation Centre. Available online: <http://www.dcc.ac.uk/resources/how-guides>
2. Plain English campaign - <http://www.plainenglish.co.uk/free-guides.html>
3. Access to Understanding ‘Writing about biomedical and health research in plain English’ - [http://www.access2understanding.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/Access-to-Understanding-writing-guidance\\_v1.pdf](http://www.access2understanding.org/wpcontent/uploads/2014/11/Access-to-Understanding-writing-guidance_v1.pdf)